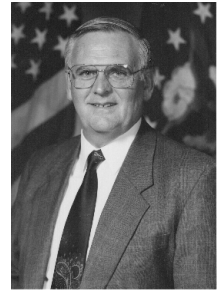


# NOTES FROM THE:

## Deputy Assistant Secretary, Financial Operations

by Mr John J. Nethery



We've been working feverishly on mandatory government travel card implementation. Following is the transcript of the Air Force policy.

The Travel and Transportation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-264) requires use of the government travel card for official travel expenses. The effective date for implementation is 1 May 2000. The final USD(C) policy guidance (reference SAF/FM web site at <http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil>) will be included in the next update to DoD Financial Management Regulation 7000.14R Volume 9, Travel Policy and Procedures. This memo is effective 1 May 2000 and will be incorporated into the next revisions of AFI 65-103, Temporary Duty Orders, AFI 65-104, Government Travel Charge Card Program, and AFI 24-101, Passenger Movement.

A. Transportation Charges. 1. Transportation charges may be billed to a centrally billed account (CBA), which means one card for an entire base or unit. Charges may also be billed to a card carried in an individual's pocket, called an Individually Billed Account (IBA). 2. MAJCOM commanders may decide whether transportation charges for official transportation travel are billed to CBAs or IBAs or a mix. MAJCOM commanders may also delegate this decision to their base or installation commanders. The key criterion should not change: protect the traveler from inconvenience or extra workload. Central billing may increase reconciliation workload. To address this concern, an effort is underway to develop reconciliation software and additional automation will eventually be available as the Defense Travel System is deployed. 3. In cases where commanders decide that billing to individual cards is acceptable, they should encourage travelers to use the split disbursement option. Under split disbursement, the Government pays the travel card for official charges directly rather than sending the money to an individual who must then pay the bill. As a result of legal and policy considerations mandatory split disbursement is not appropriate, but commanders should take steps to explain and strongly encourage its use. 4. In certain cases, it will still be necessary to continue to use Government Transportation Requests (GTRs) for the purchase of official transportation in addition to IBAs and CBAs. However, GTR use should be eliminated to the maximum extent possible.

B. Exemptions. 1. Air Force policy mirrors DoD guidance with a number of exemptions to mandatory

use of the travel card. Specifically, paragraph E.1. of the USD(C) guidance exempts certain classes of personnel from mandatory use of the travel card. (For the exemption set out at subparagraph E.1.a. (3), "new appointees" are defined to be those with fewer than three months of service since joining or rejoining civil service.) Commanders may implement these exemptions without prior approval but must be prepared to justify them. 2. Similarly, paragraph E.2. exempts certain categories of expenses from mandatory use of the travel card. The result of these exemptions is that the card must be used only for transportation, lodging, and rental cars though it can be used for other charges associated with government travel. Commanders should apply these exemptions as appropriate. 3. Paragraph E.3. allows individual exemptions to be granted without the prior approval of USD(C) and blanket exemptions with the prior approval of USD(C). For all exemptions under paragraph E.3., MAJCOM, FOA, and DRU commanders must submit fully justified requests for such exemptions through channels to SAF/FM prior to implementation. SAF/FM will forward the request to USD(C) or notify GSA as appropriate and notify the commander if and when the exemption can be granted. Commanders should limit exemption requests to those required as a matter of operational necessity. The requirement for mandatory use of the travel card applies to all members of the active duty Air Force, civilian employees, and members of the USAFR and ANG while in Federal service (Title 10 status). DoD has consulted with the National Unions on the provisions of the new law. Servicing Civilian Personnel Flights should be contacted to ensure local bargaining obligations are satisfied prior to implementation of this guidance for bargaining unit employees.

C. Compliance. The law and regulations do not address issues of discipline related to this act. Discipline is at the discretion of commanders and should be applied in a measured, graduated fashion. The following statement should be placed on all travel orders, "All DoD personnel are required to use the government-sponsored, contractor-issued travel charge card for all expenses arising from official government travel, unless otherwise exempted in accordance with the provisions detailed in paragraph E of the USD(C) TTRA policy guidance dated 18 February 2000."